

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 9934

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, AF, IN
SUBJECT: FOREIGN SECRETARY'S VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: NEW DELHI 9680

1. I TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF JUNE 27 DEMARCHE ON SSOD
TO ASK FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT MEHTA ABOUT HIS
JUNE 22-23 VISIT TO KABUL. MEHTA SAID HE HAD BEEN
WARMLY RECEIVED DURING HIS 36-HOUR STAY IN KABUL,
DURING WHICH TIME HE HAD EIGHT OR NINE HOURS OF
CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER TARAKI AND FOREIGN
MINISTER AMIN, AND LESSER LIGHTS IN FOREIGN OFFICE.
MEHTA THOUGHT IT SIGNIFICANT THAT HE HAD BEEN
THE FIRST "GENERALIST" OFFICIAL, AS DISTINCT FROM
TECHNICAL SPECIALIST, FROM A NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRY
TO VISIT AFGHANISTAN. I TOOK THIS DISTINCTION AS AN
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INDIRECT REFERENCE TO DR. PETERSON OF THE FRG.

2. IN HIS TALKS WITH THE AFGHANS, MEHTA SAID HE HAD
STRESSED THE LONG-EXISTING, FRIENDLY AND "NON-IDEOLOGICALLY
BASED" RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN WHICH HAD
EASILY ABSORBED CHANGES IN BOTH COUNTRIES, THE EMERGENCY
IN INDIA AND THE COUP IN AFGHANISTAN. FOREIGN SECRETARY

SAID HE HAD TOLD THE AFGHANS THAT INDIA WOULD BE WILING TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, BUT NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT OFFERED ANY NEW ASSISTANCE.

3. FOR THEIR PART, THE AFGHANS HAD EMPHASIZED TO MEHTA THAT THE REVOLUTION WAS OF THEIR OWN MAKING, THAT THEY WERE NOT BEHOLDEN TO ANY FOREIGN POWER, THAT THEY WOULD DEFINE THEIR POSITION TOWARD FOREIGN COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO WHETHER OR NOT THESE COUNTRIES ACCEPTED THE REVOLUTION. MEHTA OPINED THAT THE AFGHAN LEADERS WERE SINCERE IN THEIR NATIONALIST PROTESTATIONS, ADDING THAT HE DOUBTED WHETHER ANY AFGHAN REGIME COULD IMPOSE COMMUNISM ON THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. HE SAID AMIN HAD INFORMED HIM OF HIS CONVERSATIONS IN NEW YORK WITH MR. SAUNDERS AND MENTIONED THAT THE AFGHANS HAD SAID THEY HOPED THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE, AND EVEN INCREASE, ITS AID TO AFGHANISTAN.

4. ON THE SUBJECT OF PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS, SAID MEHTA, THE AFGHANS CLAIMED IT WAS A FACT OF LIFE THAT THE PUSHTUNISTAN AND BALUCHISTAN ISSUES EXISTED BUT THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO PURSUE THEIR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO MEHTA, THE AFGHANS DID NOT SUGGEST HOW THEY INTENDED TO MOVE ON THESE TWO ISSUES.

5. MEHTA ALLOWED AS HOW THE AFGHAN COUP HAD SERVED TO EXACERBATE PAK-INDIAN RELATIONS AND PUT A TEMPORARY CONFIDENTIAL

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STOP TO THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION. IN THIS CONNECTION HE SAID RECENT STATEMENTS BY ZIA HAD GIVEN INDIA SOME CONCERN. (PRESUMABLY HE WAS REFERRING TO ZIA'S REMARKS ON KASHMIR IN HIS JUNE 25 ADDRESS TO THE NATION) MEHTA ALSO, WITH SOME BITTERNESS, REFERRED TO PAKISTAN'S PRACTICE OF TALKING OF A MOSCOW-KABUL-DELHI AXIS. MEHTA THEN WENT ON TO EXPOUND THE FAMILIAR INDIAN POSITION THAT THE PAKS, BY OVERREACTING TO THE AFGHAN COUP, RAN THE DANGER OF CREATING A HOSTILE AFGHAN STANCE TOWARD PAKISTAN.

6. IN RESPONSE TO MEHTA'S QUESTIONING ABOUT OUR OWN ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN. I MENTIONED THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SOVIET ADVISERS SINCE THE COUP AND THE INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE SUPPLANTING THE U.S. IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD AND THE WEST GERMANS IN THE AREA OF POLICE TRAINING. IN THE COURSE OF DISCUSSING PARHAM-KHALQ RELATIONS, MEHTA SAID BABRAK HAD NOT BEEN SEEN FOR SOME DAYS IN KABUL.

7. MEHTA ALSO SAID THAT HIS TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO BEGIN JUNE 28, HAD BEEN INDEFINITELY POSTPONED.

8. COMMENT: THE AFGHAN COUP HAS PRESENTED THE JANATA GOVERNMENT WITH ITS FIRST SIGNIFICANT AND UNANTICIPATED CLOSE-TO-HOME PROBLEM IN A FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA WHICH HAS HITHERTO BEEN RELATIVELY EASY TO MANAGE AND, INDEED, QUITE WELL MANAGED. MEHTA'S VISIT TO KABUL APPEARS A FURTHER EFFORT ON INDIA'S PART, IN THE WAKE OF DISCUSSIONS IN MOWCOW, TEHRAN, LONDON AND WASHINGTON, TO ADVANCE GOI VIEW THAT EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN NEED NOT OF THEMSELVES UNDERCUT REGIONAL STABILITY AND HINDER INDIA'S POLICY OF FOSTERING EFFECTIVE BILATERAL COOPERATION AND OFFSET OUTSIDE INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INDIANS TO DEMONSTRATE A MORE ACTIVE INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN AND STRESS REGIONAL AND NON-ALIGNED
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AFFINITIES IS FACILITATED BY THE FACT THAT INDIA HAS TRADITIONALLY ENJOYED THE LEAST FRICTIONAL RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN OF ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS AND HAS ITS OWN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE DRA'S PRINCIPAL SUPPORTER, THE SOVIET UNION. NEVERTHELESS, A MORE ACTIVE INDIAN INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN, NO MATTER HOW WELL-INTENTIONED, WILL GIVE RISE TO FURTHER PAK SUSPICIONS AND IRRITATE PAK-INDIAN RELATIONS. WE THINK THAT THE INDIANS ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS RISK BUT HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THEIR REGIONAL OBJECTIVES AS OUTLINED ABOVE WARRANT THE RISK AND THAT IN ANY CASE PAKISTAN'S MISTRUST OF INDIA IN THE CURRENT SITUATION WOULD CONTINUE.
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